

ACTIVE DUTY

Associate professor finds balance in life as family man, teacher and colonel

By Evan Young
Editor in Chief

Lisa Houtchens
University News Editor

Life is a balancing act for many.

For Northwest Associate Professor Mark Corson, it is all about finding the right balance between spending quality time with his family, creating tests for his classes and serving his country.

Along with the general responsibilities that come with teaching, Corson also serves as a colonel in the U.S. Army and has a family.

"We all figure out the balance we need," Corson said. "And it is a challenge."

Dr. Corson:

Before Corson made his decision to teach at Northwest, he had the opportunity to teach at the University of South Carolina at Aiken, but instead decided to teach at Northwest after an interview with university faculty impressed him.

Corson has taught at Northwest for 11 years and during his career has spent a significant amount of time away from the University serving the United States.

When Corson is at Northwest, he teaches introduction to geogra-

phy, geography of North America, military geography and political geography along with many other courses.

"I love being in the classroom working with the students," Corson said. "And giving a high energy lecture and having a discussion."

He is able to balance his two careers and enjoys both equally.

During his time away, other faculty divide out Corson's workload, Associated Geography Professor Renee Rohs said.

"I think his involvement in the military is highly regarded in our department; and we recognize the importance of what he does for our country," Rohs said.

Colonel Corson:

"I think there is a real synergy between my civilian job and my military job," Corson said.

The military recognizes Corson has a history with political geography and it has placed him in roles such as a lead negotiator in Kosovo.

"Both sides see the synergy in the relationship," Corson said.

Schuster works with Corson and often represents him in the

Army during his time of absence. She recognizes his experience in the military and his civilian life complement each other, she said.

Corson served in the Army on active duty from 1983 to 1994 in Europe and Fort Stuart, Ga., as a tank officer. After the Cold War ended, Corson went to graduate school at the University of South Carolina for geography. A motivation for Corson's graduate work was a position at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point to teach geography.

His time at West Point opened up another door for his future.

"What I figured out at West Point after teaching full time, was that I love teaching geography," Corson said. "Just as much as I loved being in the army."

In 1994, the Army was decreasing in size, and offered Corson the option to leave the active Army and enter into the Army Reserve. The Army paid for Corson to get his doctorate in geography. After graduating, Corson taught geographic techniques to teachers in South Carolina for one year, before coming to Northwest.

Corson aided in the prevention

of a civil war between Macedonia and the Serbian borders. He was also the Theater Movement Control Battalion Commander in the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

During Corson's time in the Army Reserve and going to college, he still had to support his wife and two daughters. Because his transition into the Army Reserve was the day after he left the active Army, he had to find a way to make money while in graduate school so he began to work. He became a transportation officer, where he supervised the loading and unloading of ships coming to port in Charleston, S.C.

When Corson moved to northwest Missouri, he continued to do various logistical jobs to support his family.

He is currently commanding the 561 Regional Support group, where he either runs a forward operating base or does multifunctional support.

In October, Corson plans to take command of the 94 Training Division that teaches course sustainment for personnel services.

See CORSON on A5

ELECTRONIC CAMPUS

New Web portal takes time to pique student interest

By Shane Sherwood
Senior Reporter

The Web site gets 1,100 hits a day, even though many students don't know what it is.

The myNorthwest portal connects all users and allows students and faculty to check e-mail, pay their bill and check eCompanion in one site.

The site launched in May as an inclusion in the upgrade for the financial systems and human

resources system.

It required an additional two servers, costing \$25,000. Information Systems Vice President Jon Rickman said.

"My Northwest only cost the amount of the servers, which is about \$5,000 a year since they last five years."

Quick Facts: myNorthwest features

- E-mail access
- University bill access
- Logon link to eCompanion
- University organization Web sites
- Organizational updates
- Personal announcements
- Campus news and announcement
- Feature photos
- Google search
- Daily Northwest events

Rickman said.

"Then there is one full-time faculty member allocated to it, as well."

The portal is now beyond the testing stages, Rickman said. The University has a plan for helping myNorthwest grow, including having official groups and organizations create

groups and use it for updates.

"We're letting

myNorthwest grow naturally," Rickman said. "It'll take time for it to be used by most students."

Auxiliary Services Director Mark Hetzler said the reason more students are not using it is because it's typically hard to change habits.

"It will probably take several years to get the usage rate we would like," Hetzler said. "We are changing to a new

See WEB on A5

CAMPUS ACTIVITIES

Rapper hits sold out PAC Friday night

By Katie Luers
Chief Reporter

Fans flocked to the student services desk Aug. 25, selling out the Tech N9ne concert within 36 hours. About 1,100 people purchased tickets for Friday's show.

Tech N9ne will return to Maryville to perform in front of a new crowd at the Performing Arts Center.

The rapper performed at Northwest about six years ago. The Student Activities Council decided to bring him back to campus after a survey showed a high interest among students.

The concert doors open at 6:30 p.m., and the concert will begin at 7:30. The only concert entrance will be the front door to the Performing Arts Center.

Tech N9ne is artist Aaron Yates from the Kansas City area. He remained an underground artist until the late 1990s and has grown consistently since then.

Tech N9ne is willing to accommodate, Sarah Smith, student activities council graduate assistant, said.

"He seems down to earth and easy to get along with," Smith said.

Many students were asking the Campus Activities Office for more information as soon as the concert was announced.

"We put up the poster, right as you're leaving the Union, and people were already coming to the office," Assistant Director of Campus Activities Candice Wolf said, "Asking 'When can I get tickets? When is he coming?'

The ticket sale opened 8 a.m. Aug. 25 at the Student Services desk. The tickets sold out by 3:20 the following afternoon.

SAC concert committee chair Brandon Matulka said a survey was a large deciding factor for the fall concert.

The survey put out by the SAC asked students their preferred genre of music. Then it asked what artist they prefer within that genre.

"Tech N9ne was the most widely accepted by students for the price range," Matulka said.

SAC tries to rotate between genres. Last fall, the school hosted an alternative band, Hellogoodbye, and last spring a country artist, Dierks Bentley.

"A lot of people thought after the country concert that we were just going to keep bringing country artists back," Wolf said. "We're trying to show people that we're bringing in a diverse group of artists."

A lot of work goes into each concert. This fall, about 20 to 30 students are involved in the preparation. The students have worked on planning the event since July. These students are all part of the SAC organization and helped with all the concert details.

These details include providing food for the band and a place for them to stay.

Aramark is catering barbecue for the band the night of the concert, Wolf said.

Seating for the concert is on a first come, first serve basis.

There is no food or drink permitted in the Performing Arts Center, including no alcohol or tobacco. Security will check people at the door.

"Hopefully the concert will get students excited about being at Northwest," Wolf said.

CAMPUS BRIEFS

Group offers on-campus voter registration

iVote is registering voters from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. now until Sept. 26 on the second floor of the J.W. Jones Student Union.

Acts, emcees needed for homecoming

Auditions for the Homecoming Variety Show olio acts and emcees will be held from 6 to 10 p.m. Sept. 17 in the Charles Johnson Theater.

Anyone interested in auditioning may sign up at the Campus Activities Office on the second floor of the J.W. Jones Student Union.

For more information, contact Kaley Johnson or Mary Welborn.

Faculty, classes named for pilot

In cooperation with Sony, Northwest will implement the Reader Digital Book pilot program next week. The following Northwest faculty and classes were chosen to pilot the new technology. Not all courses sections will be involved in the pilot.

Associate Professor Jim Eissert, Introduction to Philosophy.

Professor Nancy Zellif, Computers and Information Technology.

Instructor Rod Barr, Program Planning in Agricultural Education.

Associate Professor Thomas Spencer, America - A Historical Survey

UNIVERSITY FEATURE

In Bearcat Stadium press box, it's business as usual

By Dominic Genetti
Project Manager

Sitting on the 50-yard line, Brian Boettcher watches closely as Northwest battles Abilene Christian University in the football home opener at Bearcat Stadium.

But Boettcher isn't wearing a Northwest T-shirt or face paint, he's not even among the thousands of screaming fans reacting to every drive.

Instead, he is sitting in the press box in front of a laptop, dressed up in a white long-sleeve button down dress shirt, a black and gold striped tie mixed with different shades of green and olive pants. Boettcher is Northwest's sports information director, or SID in media terms.

"Scott rushed 32-yards to the three, tackled by Martin," he announces to the media members sitting around him.

Computer keyboards come alive, sounding like tap dancers on a Broadway stage.

That's just part of his duties while the game goes on. He also constantly updates stats through a software system called Stat Crew, allowing other outlets to stay in check.

"It's a way SIDs communicate with each other as well as the conference office, as well as the NCAA," Boettcher said. "It creates HTML files that we use for our Web site so as soon as the game's over, we're able to send the game to the NCAA, have a box score for our media, to our conference and we're instantly able to put our statistics up on our Web site."

About an hour and a half before game time, members of the media begin to arrive.

Carrying cameras, laptops and notepads, they file into the press box prepared to cover game one of the 2008 season. Before the game even begins, Boettcher has already provided them with stats and information.

"We create what's called game notes, it's simply all the information that a newspaper writer or television station would need to do or write an effective story."

Problems may occur with the wireless Internet router during the game, but other than that, things tend to go smoothly as the media are given continuous updates while the game is played.

Separated by a wall and thick-glass window, computers and TV monitors buzz and hum in the room next door. It is the hub of the stadium's TV crew, announcements and scoreboard operations.

"We're on one, ready two," Will Murphy says into his headset.

Murphy is the director of Cat Vision, the facility's live game video.

"We take three cameras positioned throughout

the stadium and do a mix of live shots (and) pre-programmed announcements," he said. "We roll all this into a live video feed and then present it through the board that's out on the field and also to the suites."

Music and referee mics are also channeled through the booth and broadcasted through stadium speakers.

Watching each monitor closely, Murphy communicates shots and positions to each cameraman on the stadium floor.

"Take one, ready two, one follow him through to the kick, but stick with him," he says fiddling with a marker.

He folds his arms and paces from the monitors to the large windows facing the field.

During taping, the Cat Vision team gives equal coverage to both the Bearcats and Abilene Christian players as well as the fans, however, some things won't be shot and some people aren't open to camera usage.

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TOUCHDOWN!



photo by jared clark | convergence director

SHIRTLESS BEARCAT MEMBERS Scarlet Casey and Sean Dowden embrace after Dowden proposed to Casey at Saturday's Bearcat football game. Dowden popped the question to his girlfriend at the end of the first quarter. While spelling out "SCAR" with other members of the Shirtless Bearcats, Dowden knelt down and presented the ring. The Bearcat football team's evening wasn't as romantic; Northwest lost to Abilene Christian, 44-27.

See PRESS BOX on A6

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CAMPUS

COMMUNITY

APARTMENTS

Students benefit from newly built apartment complex

Chris Lee
Community News Editor

Construction was a word frequently mentioned this summer in Maryville. In addition to Main Street construction, several apartment complexes popped up around town.

One that likely caught the eyes of passers-by is the apartment complex located at 418 W. Seventh St. Construction began in early summer and finished in time for students moving back for school.

Brett Robinson now lives at the brand new complex.

"I saw that the building was going up and that they had a sign advertising the new building," Robinson said. "I called and space was still available."

The complex is located just off campus on the corner of Seventh and Walnut streets. Mostly Northwest students occupy the apartments, making it an easy commute to campus.

"It is really nice being close to campus," Robinson said. "It's a blast seeing all of the people walking by. You get to see a lot of people."

The complex consists of four separate apartments. They each have three bedrooms with two baths.

"The walls aren't thin, we haven't heard our neighbors since we have moved in," Robinson said. "It has been nice. We got to know all of our neighbors and we hang out all of the time."

The lot where the new complex stands used to provide space to an older house that consisted of apartment style living. That building was torn down in order for the new apartment complex to be built.

Nisha Bharti lived in Maryville Main celebrates its 50th year being open. Owner Cliff McNair remembers the business's history.

Bill Ragan opened the business in 1948 in Skidmore as Ragan's Radios. It moved to Maryville in 1949, McNair said. Ragan sold the business to Ron Goff in the early 60s.

Ragan started off selling General Electric radios, but when it moved to Maryville, Ragan began selling GE appliances and televisions, McNair said.

"Our business started off with GE, and it has stayed true to the brand until we started selling Lucky Goldstar electronics," McNair said.

McNair bought the business in 1985.

"I worked at the store for nine years. I really enjoyed working with people, and I liked the business," McNair said. "I was also making good income while going to school."

Goff sold the store because he made a promise that when his bookkeeper retired, he would retire also, McNair said.

Best Brands Plus has been at its current location since 2000, McNair said. Before, it was in five different locations around Maryville.

"The reason we moved locations is because of insufficient parking and no room to expand," McNair said.

Cathy McCrary has been the bookkeeper for the business since January 1986. She remembers not wanting to be the bookkeeper.

"I looked at it as just a job opportunity, and I was in need of a job," McCrary said. "Now I really like it. I have no problems at all."

US BANK



Holly Weisenburger, US Bank employee, is the winner of the US Bank drawing. Holly Weisenburger, is pictured with North Branch Manager Amber Parker. Weisenburger won three credit hours worth of in-state tuition from the bank. US Bank has tables at both SOAR (Summer Orientation Advisement and Registration) and Advantage, both part of Northwest's orientation program for incoming freshmen. Students were given the opportunity to put their name in the drawing for the free tuition at both events. Weisenburger, 18, of Dekalb, Mo. is a pre-med major at Northwest.

Kelley Dempsey | Chief Photographer

ELECTION 2008

McCain V.P. choice stirs discussion and surprises

Lindsay Jacobs
Copy Editor

No matter who takes the White House in January, history will be made.

Last Friday, John McCain announced Sarah Palin's name would be listed with his on the November ballot.

Palin, governor of Alaska, brings history-making potential to McCain's campaign.

Accounting, Economics and Finance Professor Mark Jelavich was surprised when he heard Palin will be McCain's running mate because he'd never heard of her before. Palin's executive experience is a positive for McCain's campaign, Jelavich said. Her major and governor experience are an asset for McCain's campaign, Jelavich said.

News broke over the weekend that Palin's 17-year-old daughter is five months pregnant. Jelavich doesn't think Palin's family issues will have a big impact on the McCain Campaign.

"I think most people would probably consider it as a private matter, not a public one," Jelavich said.

In the past, candidates' children have been off limits, Jelavich said, which is probably the reason Barack Obama's campaign said they wouldn't comment about it.

"She has the reputation of shaking up the party establishment in her state," Jelavich said. "I think also the fact that she's a woman obviously has a certain appeal."

When History, Humanities, Philosophy and Politics Professor Richard Fulton heard the news he was also "very surprised."

"This was an interesting and strange choice," Fulton said. "It's just sort of out of left field."

It appears McCain is catering to two groups with his decision, Fulton said, the very conservative Republicans and women.

"She's going to be a heartbreak away from the presidency and the president's 72-years-old, with some health problems in the past, she has no, absolutely no background in national defense or foreign policy," Fulton said.

Palin's name on the ticket does energize the more conservative in the party, Fulton said.

Washington University in St. Louis will host the vice presidential debate Oct. 2.

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OUR VIEW

Pilot participants should provide honest feedback on electronic textbooks

Since Northwest turned on the Electronic Campus more than 20 years ago, the University has developed a reputation for being one of the most tech-savvy in Missouri — from the laptops that accompany many Bearcats to class, to the mass text messages they will receive in the event of an emergency.

This year, the University hopes to take yet another technological step forward by implementing an electronic textbook program as early as the spring semester.

Northwest, in cooperation with Sony, will pilot the Reader Digital Book (eReader) program beginning next week.

Similar to an iPod, the eReader contains a library capable of holding up to 1600 downloadable, versions of conventional textbooks, or eBooks, along with other documents, like class syllabuses.

Confined, the eReaders and eBooks would replace the majority of conventional textbooks currently available through the University's textbook rental program. Gone would be the days of heavy backpacks and overloaded Hy-Vee paper bags during textbook pickup.

The price isn't too bad either; the University received the manufacturer's discount for the eReaders it will distribute during the pilot (from \$300 to \$277.50 apiece). If the pilot is successful, the institution will buy the remaining devices in bulk for a deeper price cut. Current student textbook rental fees would stay the same, University officials predict.

Northwest would become the first institution in the country to start up an electronic textbook program, according to Sony. President Dean Hubbard boldly declared he'd never buy a traditional book (textbook or otherwise) again if it were available as an eBook. The two parties firmly believe electronic textbooks will become an

educational norm in the future. However, being the leader isn't always easy, especially when it comes to pioneering new technology.

When the Northwest community first learned about the idea, several had questions about the technology. It was a combination of curiosity and resistance; teachers and students seemed willing to give Sony a chance but hesitant to completely give up their textbooks, which are certainly more conducive to highlighting passages, making notes in the margins and supplementing text with colorful pictures and graphics.

However, Paul Klute, assistant to the president, said 50 faculty members showed interest in using eReaders for their classes. The volunteers were from a wide range of departments and classes. Classes will be chosen for the pilot based on the availability of textbooks. Then, students in those classes will receive eBooks, with the correct textbooks already downloaded.

Sony and Northwest are working on an evaluation procedure for faculty and students to complete toward the end of the trimester. Klute said quantitative data, such as test scores and final grades, would be used in addition to comments, concerns and questions.

The Northwest Missourian challenges those students and faculty to push their eReaders to the limit during the pilot. The opinions of just a fraction of the Northwest population will help determine the future of textbooks at Northwest.

We urge pilot participants to take this opportunity seriously. Provide the University with honest, thorough feedback — positive and negative — about this new technology. Electronic textbooks have the potential to lead Northwest into a new era of teaching and learning. However, the University must know it's doing the right thing for its faculty and students.



MY VIEW

Relations between United States, Pakistan may change if Zardari takes office

As Pakistan's presidential election nears, the United States finds itself in a delicate situation concerning the "war on terror."

Pakistan is a leading ally to the United States in the international arena, and the United States rewards the country well with its stance, giving billions of dollars to Pakistan, aiding President Bush's agenda.

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Kathleen Wilmes
Contributing Columnist

recently; appoint the prime minister; and veto privileges. And even though some will disagree, I must state that perhaps a large portion of power given to the president of Pakistan isn't such a bad thing. After all, the country is a huge volatile area with a significant threat of terrorism. However, the area is not only a large portion of formal powers, but also political powers, which can be compared to the United States political system.

Take, for example, Congress led by one party, and a president belonging to that party. A president's agenda is easier to push in this aspect.

The most frightening thing about all of this is the supposed mental instability of Zardari, and his ability to control Pakistan's nuclear weapons if he wins the presidency.

U.S. administration is the relationship between these two countries, especially in regards to how it may evolve. Regardless of which candidate wins the Pakistani presidential election, the nature of the relationship between Pakistan and the United States will change, in regards to the current administration, and a new administration that will form after the U.S. presidential election.

The deal brokered between Pakistan and the United States is already changing on Pakistan's side. In the brief five to six months of the new government, there has been an increase in the crackdown on the Taliban, and the prevention of the ease of access of militant groups on the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The interesting thing to see is if anything else changes, and whether future changes will be monumental or seemingly insignificant.

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Palin stunningly wrong choice by McCain

By James Klurfeld
Newsday (MCT)

Sometimes you just have to say that the emperor has no clothes. That's the case with Sen. John McCain'sreckless selection of Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin to be his running mate. Palin is utterly unqualified for the job of vice president. Period.

Forget about all the political analysis of the Palin selection and commentary about her personal family situation. The fact is that her experience consists of a stint as the mayor of Wasilla, with a population under 10,000; chair of Alaska's Oil and Gas Conservation Commission; and less than two years as governor of a state that has around half the number of people of either Nassau or Suffolk County. According to what we know now, she has been out of the country twice.

There have been some stunningly poor choices for vice president over

the years, going back to Barry Goldwater's choosing an unknown New York State congressman, William Miller, in 1964, or George H.W. Bush's selection of Dan Quayle in 1988. One Republican operator who worked on that Bush campaign said the goal was to choose somebody who wouldn't overshadow Bush. "We succeeded beyond our wildest expectations," he said. But at least Miller and Quayle had some Washington experience.

I'm not making a judgment on Palin as a person. She obviously presents well, has risen quickly in Alaskan politics and has a bent for reforming government. But as vice president of the United States, a heartbeat away from running the country at a time of unusual peril? Especially for a 72-year-old presidential nominee?

The real issue here is McCain's judgment. The selection of Palin has a seat-of-the-pants, let's-throw-the-dice look that is not reassuring. Yes, it shores up his conservative political base. Give McCain that. But if he believes Palin will appeal to women who supported Sen. Hillary Clinton, that's a stunningly wrong judgment. The old cliché that the most important decision a presidential candidate can make is the choice of a running mate has to give even some of McCain's supporters serious pause.

If Palin doesn't have the experience to be a national ticket, how then do the Democrats defend Sen. Barack Obama to hear theirs? It's an absolutely legitimate question. The greatest vulnerability of Obama's candidacy is not that he is the first black nominee, although that will do factor in the election. It is that he has spent so little time on the national scene. The greatest challenge Obama faces is convincing the American people that he is "presidential" — that he has the leadership skills to overcome his lack of experience.

Over the years, the selection of vice president hasn't had a major impact on Election Day — although that has been less true recently. Both Al Gore and Dick Cheney had a positive impact on their tickets. But how this will play out politically isn't the point when it comes to McCain's choice of Palin. His choice of a person with no qualifications for the job is.

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Jacob Old, Nwmissourinews.com Editor

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PRESS BOX: Personnel enjoy jobs

Continued from A2

be all wound up in the game and because I have to stay focused and do my job, I don't get as anxious during the game."

His voice can please or disappoint a crowd when other scores are announced from around the MIAA or other Northwest games. There may even be an announcement regarding a regional Division I game or a professional game, but when two certain teams are losing, that's when the fans go crazy.

"Anytime Pittsburg State's

being beaten, anytime Mo. West is being beaten," I know that when I announce those people are going to jump up and down."

Working a game in the press box can be tough at times, but it's a life they really enjoy.

"I'm here on Saturday evenings," Boettcher said with a grin as he gestures the quotations symbol. "I've got the best seat in the house and I'll know exactly how many stats Joel Osborn's thrown for before anybody else does."

Murphy smirks.

"I wouldn't call it a hard job because most of us who do this really enjoy what we do," he said. "There's instant gratification... I wouldn't call it difficult, I'd call it fulfilling."

For Sudhoff everything is a joy, announcing each play and promotion, but if he had to watch game from a different perspective, say in the stands, there would be one significant difference.

He looks out the window and laughs.

"I would get to sit with my wife."

Cuba: Gustav is worst storm to hit island in 50 years

McClatchy Newspapers

LOS PALACIOS, Cuba (MCT) — Some residents of this once-picturesque town, whose name means the palaces, have already rebaptized it: The Ruins.

Los Palacios was the first town that lay directly in the path of Hurricane Gustav when it made landfall Saturday with sustained winds exceeding 130 miles per hour and gusts of more than 200 mph.

"The devil came through here. It swept it completely," said Juan Carlos Rodriguez, who works for the municipal school management office and spent the night guarding the building.

Rodriguez estimated that 90 percent of the homes in the town were damaged and that 50 percent of the city's powerlines were down.

No deaths or severe injuries were reported, however.

"This is very sad. It's unbearable to watch," a woman said, as she burst into tears and walked away without giving her name.

Authorities called the storm damage the worst since 1956. The 212-mph gusts registered in the city of Paso Real de San Diego were the strongest in Cuba's history, according to the provincial newspaper, the Guerrillero. Winds were so strong that the weather station instruments broke.

"Things that seemed safe are damaged," Ana Isa Delgado, president of the municipal civil defense committee was quoted saying in Sunday's state media. "Cars in parking lots went flying. Others are twisted. Rooted water tanks, window and doors have been ripped out. Avenues are unpassable,"

The highway through Pinar del Rio province offers some inkling of the devastation.

Tree branches partially block the road and electric towers lie on the ground, like fallen dominoes as far as the eye can see. Entire fields of banana trees have been flattened.

At a police station, all the lampposts have toppled over and the manufactured home that

(Miami Herald correspondent Frances Robles contributed to this report from Miami.)

Republicans again face hurricane of a predicament

By Jim Tankersley
Chicago Tribune

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. (MCT) There is a certain

deja vu in a Gulf Coast hurricane disrupting Republicans' best-laid plans for their national convention here in the Twin Cities. It was a hurricane, after all, that helped uproot the GOP's "permanent majority" dreams in Washington and threatens to blow it from the White House.

Only four years ago, Republicans convened in New York City to laud President George W. Bush and highlight his response — at home and at war — to the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Bush won re-election, the party held both houses of Congress, and strategists and pundits talked of the potential for decades of Republican rule in Washington.

Then came the Bush administration's much-criticized response to Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and along the Gulf Coast, which seemed to unleash a run of bad news for the Republican Party: ethics scandals, a focus on pork-barrel spending, a national souring on the Iraq War, rising fuel prices, a slumping economy, declining approval ratings for Bush and a Democratic mid-term sweep of the House and Senate.

Sen. John McCain of Arizona, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, comes to St. Paul this week calling himself the underdog in his race against Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.).

"You just add it all together," said Ken Khachigian, a longtime GOP strategist and former senior aide to President Ronald Reagan, "and it's sort of, above all, the perfect storm."

Republican leaders now say their hopes for decades in power defied political reality. They also

say that since 2004, the party has lacked the vision to solve problems and lost sight of some core principles, including fiscal conservatism and personal accountability. Most importantly, they add, this week's convention is a chance to show voters that the GOP has seen the error of its ways.

"We were in the majority, and we loused it up," said Rep. Ray LaHood (R-Ill.), an outspoken party veteran who is retiring next year. Later, he added: "We controlled the levers of government that made it very hard for people to recover from Katrina. We've learned our lesson now."

Republicans fell victim to the kind of campaign techniques that had helped Bush win re-election,

(Chicago Tribune correspondent Rick Pearson contributed to this report.)

such as micro-targeting and turnout drives, said David Winston, a strategist who has worked extensively on GOP campaigns and with the House leadership when the party controlled Congress.

"We didn't do anything" with power in Washington, Winston said. "It became about taking pork back to (individual Republicans') districts and raising a lot of money to overwhelm your opponent with negative ads... We forgot that the reason for political campaigns is ideas, and showing voters you're ready to govern."

As a result, he said, the party lost independent voters by nearly 20 percentage points in 2006 — and lost its majority coalition in the process: "We got fired."

Winston and others say McCain is uniquely positioned to recapture that coalition because of his history of attracting independents. His challenge, they say, is to lay out the party's principles — including lower taxes, efficient government and strong national defense — and show how he would employ them to solve America's problems.

Perhaps his best opening with independents comes on gas prices and America's energy supply. Polls show a clear majority of Americans support increased domestic drilling for oil, an issue congressional Republicans have pounded with success over the last two months.

"The American people are not terribly pro-Republican right now," said Illinois Rep. Mark Kirk, who is locked in a tough re-election fight with Democrat Dan Seals. "But when it comes to high gas prices, they want a candidate to support 'all of the above' — including drilling."

"It's common-sense solutions," said retired U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert of Illinois. "It's a whole plethora of things we need to do. The Democrats are just saying no. You can't use coal liquid, you can't build more nuclear plants — everything they want is out of a windmill, but they don't want windmills off the coast of the country."

Hurricane Gustav could drown out that message this week; it's already forced Republicans to scale back their convention plans for fear of looking insensitive. But there appears to be at least one upside for McCain: Bush, whose approval ratings hover around 30 percent, canceled his plans to attend.

"Junior forward Andrea Tritz and senior midfielder Holly Ramaeker scored a goal a piece against both Southwestern Oklahoma State and Newman (Kan.) last weekend. Junior goalkeeper Kira Lazany recorded four saves and didn't allow either opponent to score."

"A big part of it was communication," Ramaeker said. "I think a big part of goals is who assists it. On my second one, Krista (Pollman) gave me a perfect ball in the right direction, and I just headed it in."

The Bearcats did lose sophomore midfielder and co-captain Heidi Slobota for the year to a knee injury. After sitting out all of last year following a transfer, Slobota didn't even make it to halftime of their first game before injuring her knee. Slobota is the second midfielder the 'Cats have lost to injury in two weeks.

Senior Shannon Fitzgerald aggravated a nagging knee injury a little more than a week before Slobota's injury and was given a medical red-shirt for the season.

Coach Tracy Hoza feels the 'Cats have a qualified substitute for Slobota in sophomore Whitney Macken.

"Whitney was pushing for a starting spot and a lot of playing time over summer," Hoza said. "Now she's going to have to play a lot more than she anticipated with Heidi gone for the season."

Hoza likes what she saw from her team in the first two games despite the injuries, and thinks they are becoming a better all-around team.

The defense played well while recording two shutouts to open the season, and offensively, they attacked the goal well, Hoza said.

Like any coach, though, she did see room for improvement.

"We need to make less mistakes, like passing when we shouldn't be," Hoza said. "There are a few things defensively too, like when to clear the ball out or when not to clear the ball out."

The 'Cats play their first home games of the season this weekend in the Bearcat Classic. They open their home schedule Friday against Northeastern (Oklahoma) State.

The Riverhawks won their first game of the year 52-0 over Harding University. They finished last season 6-13-1, including a 1-0 loss to Truman State and a tie with Central Missouri.

Sunday's game matches the 'Cats against Wayne State who went 1-13-3 in 2007 and has started 0-2 in 2008.

The 'Cats play Northeastern State at 2 p.m. Friday at Bearcat Pitch and Wayne State at 2:30 p.m. Sunday at Bearcat Pitch.

NWMISSOURIAN SPORTS

NW FOOTBALL



'Cats learning from Abilene, preparing for Southwest Baptist

By Marcus Meade
Sports Editor

Last year, the Northwest-Southwest Baptist football game got out of hand quickly. The Bearcats scored early and often, and the third-stringers were playing by the third quarter.

"When they watch the film, I would think they'll be disappointed, and most of them will be disappointed in their performance if they honestly evaluate it," Tjeerdema said. "We have to learn from it and build on it. There's a great lesson to be learned there if we'll approach it that way."

The 'Cats' focus sits on the purple

difference if we're playing Southwest Baptist or Missouri Western or Truman. The important thing is what we do, and how well we improve."

Southwest Baptist lost their opener 35-28 in overtime, but showed improvement from last year, Tjeerdema said. Running back Jeff Finnell rushed for 111 yards on 20 carries, while the Bearcats defense registered seven sacks.

Part of their improvement comes from an improved defensive line, Northwest senior offensive lineman Matt Nelson said.

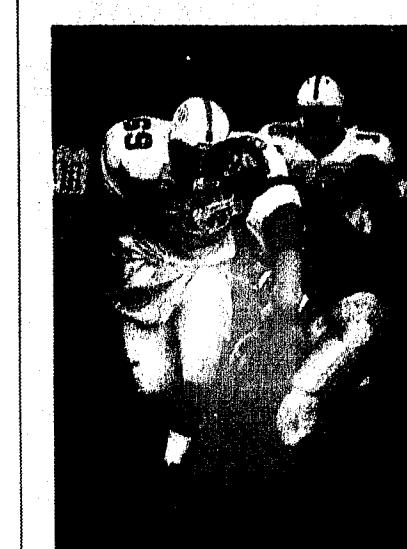
"They're (the Bearcats) a bunch of

See NW FOOTBALL on B2

THURSDAY
Sept. 4, 2008

NWmissourinews.com

MHS FOOTBALL



Big win leads 'Hounds to Irish

By Christopher Woodland
Community Sports Editor

The Maryville Spooftounds head to Lafayette this week with a 1-0 record and momentum after taking down a class four playoff team.

The 'Hounds defeated Hickman Mills 34-25 last Friday behind the running of seniors John Farmer and Adam Mattson. Maryville shut down Hickman Mills' offensive attack in the second half after battling to a 20-19 halftime advantage.

Maryville did lose junior nose tackle Jason Davis in the first quarter with a MCL strain. He is expected to miss a couple of weeks.

They played conservatively on defense last week since Farmer, filling in for injured starter Derek Johns, practiced on defense for the first time in two years.

"We ran a pretty basic cover package last week," coach Chris Holt said. "The defensive coaches can probably expand the cover packages this week now that he has an extra week in there."

Farmer had several big runs and made a big hit on a Hickman Mills wide receiver late in the fourth quarter that caused an incomplete pass.

"After I started to learn it (playing cornerback), I remembered a lot of it, and it kind of started to come back to me," Farmer said. "The extra week will help a lot. I know a lot of the stuff, but I'm still learning a bunch."

The 'Hounds held the Cougars' offense mostly in check, but several big plays by Hickman Mills kept them in the game up until Maryville recovered an onside kick by the Cougars with just more than two minutes remaining. A 48-yard Hickman Mills screen pass led to the onside kick, and was one spark for an otherwise stagnant Cougar offense produced.

"We've got to do a better job of defending the deep ball," Holt said. "We didn't do a very good job defending the deep ball Friday night. We need to add a little more pressure on the quarterback, and maybe get a little more creative with our blitz schemes. We can't have mental breakdowns in the secondary. For the most part we did pretty good, but we let some things get by."

This week, the 'Hounds play St. Joseph Lafayette. Lafayette's spread offense outscored Central (Kansas City) High School 28-12 in the second half but still managed to lose 45-35.

Offensively, the 'Hounds do not anticipate changing their game plan much for Lafayette.

"We're just going to do what we do," Holt said. "We're going to come out and run the football and establish the line of scrimmage. If they give us something in the passing game, we will take it, but we're content to keep it on the ground."

The 'Hounds kickoff against Lafayette at 7 p.m. Friday in St. Joseph.

NW FOOTBALL

NW SOCCER

Hoza's bunch start 2-0

By Christopher Woodland
Community Sports Editor

Two was a mystical number for the Northwest soccer team this past weekend.

Two players scored a total of two goals in two 2-0 victories to open the season.

Junior forward Andrea Tritz and senior midfielder Holly Ramaeker scored a goal a piece against both Southwestern Oklahoma State and Newman (Kan.) last weekend. Junior goalkeeper Kira Lazany recorded four saves and didn't allow either opponent to score.

"A big part of it was communication," Ramaeker said. "I think a big part of goals is who assists it. On my second one, Krista (Pollman) gave me a perfect ball in the right direction, and I just headed it in."

The Bearcats did lose sophomore midfielder and co-captain Heidi Slobota for the year to a knee injury. After sitting out all of last year following a transfer, Slobota didn't even make it to halftime of their first game before injuring her knee. Slobota is the second midfielder the 'Cats have lost to injury in two weeks.

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For the one described above Quinlin has

each player grab a band from his office in the weight room and line up on the goal line on the football field.

Each participant ties their band to their partner's and runs 10-yard sprints that include

NW VOLLEYBALL

Tool's team splits during weekend tourney

By Brian Bosiljevac
University Sports Editor

After a 2-2 start, the Northwest volleyball team hopes consistency can lead to a more successful outing this weekend.

The Bearcats became the comeback kids of the Nebraska-Omaha's Comfort Inn & Suites and Firewater Grille Tournament, last Friday and Saturday.

After losing their first match both Friday and Saturday, the 'Cats rallied back to win their second matches both days.

"It was really good to see us bounce back after both of our losses to get the wins each day," coach Anna Tool said. "Now, we just have to get that win early on as well."

On Friday, the 'Cats lost the opening match to Michigan Tech, 3-1. They then went on to beat Minnesota-Crookston 3-1 later that night.

Two of the 'Cats who shined on Friday were junior co-captain Rachel Nisi and sophomore Amber Ryan.

Nisi recorded the 12th and 13th double-double of her career, scoring double-digit figures in both kills and digs in both of Friday's games.

Amber Ryan, whom Tool said was the most consistent player of the weekend, also stood out.

"We need to be able to push the ball

to her even more when she is playing that good," Tool said.

Ryan hit above .300 in both of the 'Cats' Friday games. In their first match, Ryan hit .316 and added nine kills to the team's total while in the second match she hit a career best .524 and had 12 kills.

"In practice, we have been working on running quicker hits, and I think that definitely carried over onto the court," Ryan said.

Saturday showed similar results after losing to Minnesota State-Moorhead, 3-0, the 'Cats rebounded to defeat Mary (N.D.), 3-1.

Ryan made it three in a row as she hit above .300 once more in the loss to Minnesota State-Moorhead.

Ryan played consistently, but it was true freshman Alex Hanna who stole the show in the win over Mary (N.D.), Tool said.

"It was nice to see all of our hard work in practice pay off," Hanna said.

Hanna had a tournament high 18 kills against Mary (N.D.). She also hit a strong .412 for the match.

"I think overall for our first tournament, we did pretty good," Ryan said. "When we got going, we did really good but there is definitely room for improvement."

The 'Cats hope to make those improvements in time for their tourna-

ment in Joplin Mo., this weekend.

"When we get on a roll, it is really hard to stop us," Ryan said. "We need to be able to stay motivated when we get on a roll like that."

Tool thinks in order to compete with the four teams they will face in the Missouri Southern Invitational, they need to be sharper on the court and develop more persistence.

The four teams that stand in the head, 3-0, the 'Cats swept to Dallas Baptist.

Drury finished the 2007 season with a 15-15 record, and the 'Cats swept

Midwestern State 3-0, in their match last season.

The two teams the 'Cats need to keep an eye on are the teams who performed well in the tough Lone Star Conference last year.

Central Oklahoma finished the season with 32-7 record and advanced to the national tournament semifinals, but they are struggling to replace their two best players from last season.

The 'Cats start off the tournament at 4 p.m., Friday, in Joplin, with their opening match against Drury (Mo.).

"Expect us to be competitive with every team we see," Tool said. "I am confident that we can go in there and put up a strong showing. I fully expect us to walk away 4-0."

OUTSIDE HITTER PAIGE Spengenberg moved from her position as a libero last year. Spengenberg helped the 'Cats go 2-2 with 14 kills last weekend.

including their All-American libero, Mari Araujo.

The Bronchos are already off to a 0-4 start this season.

Midwestern State finished last year 27-6. They also made the school's first appearance in the NCAA Division II Southwest Regional tournament. The Mustangs went 4-0 in their first tournament.

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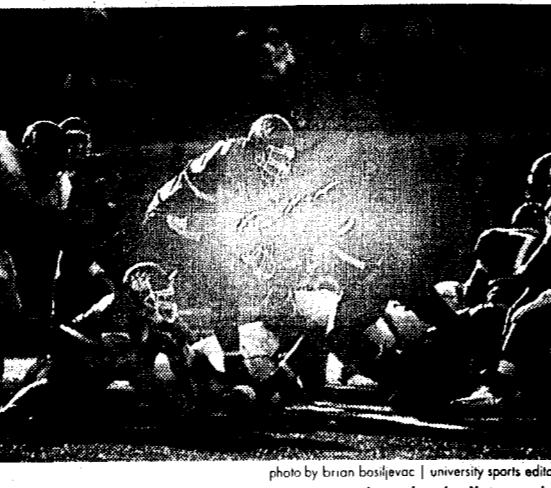
SCORE BY QUARTER

(1-0) 7 10 20 7 — 44

(0-1) 21 0 0 6 — 27

TEAM STATISTICS

Northwest		Abilene Christian	
402	Total yards	516	
71	Total plays	64	
73	Rushing yards	223	
23	Rushing attempts	39	
4-2	Fumbles-lost	1-1	
329	Passing yards	293	
48	Passing attempts	25	
1-11	Sacks-yards lost	2-16	
29-48-0	Comp-Att-Int.	8-25-0	
4-187	Punts-yards	4-140	
57	Off. yards per play	8.1	
23	First Downs	22	
8-1	Penalties-yards	10-75	
0-0	Int-yards	0-0	
5 of 13	Third downs	5 of 10	
3 of 5	Fourth Downs	0	



SPOOFHOUNDS

MHS GOLF

Van de Ven leads group in tough weather to second victory of year

By Marcus Meade
Sports Editor

first match. For some, that meant working on swing mechanics at the driving range. For others, that meant time spent on the practice green.

But practice couldn't prepare the 'Hounds for the tough weather they faced Tuesday. High winds and rain caused a change in some golfers' games, senior Kim Hanna said. She led the team in scoring during its first match with a 49 and finished third on the team with a 56 this round.

"If the wind's against you when you drive, it sticks because it pulls your ball the other way," Hanna said. "The rain just makes it hard because you have to put on more clothes so you can stay dry, and that makes it harder for you to swing."

Ricks spent time during the meet talking to golfers about course etiquette and other wrinkles that might help them when districts arrive in October.

Districts seems like an easier path for the 'Hounds this year with Savannah, last year's winner, out of Maryville's district. Savannah also provided last year's individual winner.

The 'Hounds continue their season today in St. Joseph against Lafayette.

MHS SOCCER

Dragons prove no match for explosive offense in Barstow tourney

By Dustin Sander
Assistant Sports Editor

very optimistic for the rest of their season.

"I am pretty excited that we didn't over estimate ourselves and go out and let this game get away from us," Junior John Morton said. "This is the first game we have played and it was a good start. We have a lot of depth and that means the starters will be able to (take) more break time, and not being tired gives us a better chance to win."

The 'Hounds expect fierce competition that they experienced Tuesday night, including teams like Platte County. Morton said.

"If they play like they did tonight, we have a great chance of winning this tournament and having a successful season," Collins said. "We are a lot quicker than a lot of teams, and they used that."

Maryville is a very young team and this game was the first that many of them played together. They return only three starters from last year's squad.

"We moved the ball around very well for the first time we have all played together," Rogers said. "Hopefully, we can turn this into a good season, hopefully as good or better than last year."

The 'Hounds take on Platte County at 5:45 p.m., today at Barstow, Missouri.

Bands: Versatility makes bands useful for all sports

NW CROSS COUNTRY

Team ready to host meet, anxious to run

By Dustin Sander
Assistant Sports Editor

Continued from B1

them. You can do lower body, and you can do upper body."

The volleyball team's use of the bands shows another aspect of the bands' versatility.

They stretch with them after every game to keep their muscles loose and flexible.

"It's nice for some sports where you're not necessarily looking to gain a lot of size," Quinlin said. "You know in football you're looking to bulk up, but in basketball, volleyball and even baseball where you want to keep that range of motion, they are very useful."

In addition to training college athletes, Quinlin also introduced several high school athletes to the bands in camps during the past five years. Maryville High School is among the schools he visits.

While there are definite benefits to the Jump Stretch Bands, some strength and conditioning coaches are more cautious when it comes to training with the bands, and don't subject their athletes to many of the more rigorous exercises.

"I think it definitely has application in the arena of sports from the acceleration standpoint," University of Missouri strength and conditioning coach Josh Stoner said. "It teaches the body how to resist and overcome. It's something that's really, really important to sports. From a usage standpoint, we only use them on athletes who are ready. You have to be able to bench and squat a little bit before you're ready to use the bands."

The Tigers limit their usage of the bands primarily to stretching and increasing flexibility, Stoner said.

The 'Cats use a similar methodology when the season begins, because Quinlin recognizes the additional strain working out with the bands can have on an athlete's body.

"In the off-season, we do a lot of plyometrics with them, but during camps and the season, their bodies are so tired down we don't use them as much," Quinlin said.

Flex bands may have earned a permanent spot in the world of sports training. San Diego Chargers strength and conditioning coordinator Jeff Hurd has close ties with Quinlin and now uses Flex Bands with the Chargers, Quinlin said.

"A lot of guys kind of laugh at them at first," Quinlin said. "They kind of look at them and say 'How is that thing going to help me?'"

fast improvements which means they all worked hard in their summer workouts," Lorette said.

Sophomore Madison Marshman thinks camp is worth a lot more than just everyone getting better.

"In camp, we come much closer together as a team, and we can learn about each other, like who we can run with and who can push us," Pescador said.

Some on the team hold optimistic outlooks for such a young team.

"We raised our team potential and we can shoot for one of the top three spots to move onto nationals," Pescador said.

Lorette is planning on learning a lot from the team's first race.

"I want to find out how tough we are mentally, and if we are competitive," Lorette said. "Our fitness will improve, I know we'll get faster, but we have to jump on the mental part right away."

The 'Cats worked in camps and individually over the summer. Lorette thinks his team did a great job preparing for the season individually and as a team.

"We have seen some

hardworking kids," Nelson said. "There's some good athletes, but they're not stacked on athleticism. But they're all going to work hard, fly to the ball, try to rip the ball out and try to get up field on pass rush."

To see success Saturday, the 'Cats may need to improve their defensive line play. Northwest surrendered 177 yards to Wildcat running back Bernard Scott last weekend and didn't spend much time in the Wildcat backfield after the first quarter.

Abilene Christian's no-huddle offense gave the 'Cats trouble, Tjerdtsma said, but he's confident the defense will improve in time for Baptist who also runs an up tempo offense.

Safety Myles Burnsides hopes the defense can make the adjustments necessary to compete with teams like Abilene Christian. He saw a move toward press coverage, a tactic the 'Cats used as the game went on, as a step in the right direction.

"We have depth at the corner position," Burnsides said. "We have a lot of corners that can come in and play with anybody. It was evident in that at the end of the game when we were kind of struggling to try to get back in the game and make some plays, we switched to some man coverage, and I think we did pretty well."

The game against the purple Bearcats begins at 6 p.m. Saturday at Bearcat Stadium, and though people will expect Northwest to repeat their performance from last year, it may come down to focus during the game and in the week leading up to it.

"We knew Abilene was a great team, and we should have come out more focused," Nelson said. "I felt like we were focused in the first quarter, but I think we kind of lost that, got a little lack luster and didn't keep going after them. We definitely need to stay more focused during practice and during the game."

The 'Cats begin the season Saturday at home at the Bearcat/Spoofhound Open on the practice fields near the high-rise dorms and the baseball field.

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The 'Cats begin the season Saturday at home

THE EXTRA POINT

Wal-Mart Field at Arrowhead coming soon



For 35 years Chiefs fans have attended games religiously. For 35 years, the fans have filled seemingly every seat every game and have even broken NFL records. For 35 years grown men have cheered, cried and roared an emotional roller coaster that is incomparable in anything else in the world.

The other consistency of the last 35 years is every one of those things happened at Arrowhead Stadium.

Now, the front offices decided to sell the naming rights. That is going to change very soon.

POWER RANKINGS

MIAA

Team

1. Nebraska-Omaha	0-0
2. Northwest	0-1
3. Pittsburgh State	1-0
4. Washburn	1-0
5. Missouri Western	1-0
6. Central Missouri	1-0
7. Missouri Southern	1-0
8. Fort Hays State	1-0
9. Emporia	1-0
10. Truman	1-0

Results from last week

1. Nebraska-Omaha didn't play	
2. Northwest lost to Abilene Christian	44-27
3. Pittsburgh State beat Central Oklahoma	16-12
4. Washburn beat Colorado Mines	27-3
5. Missouri Western beat Northern St.	38-27
6. Central Missouri beat Minn. St. in check	29-9
7. Missouri Southern beat Harding	45-31
8. FHS beat New Mexico Highlands	44-0
9. Emporia beat Western State	42-0
10. Truman didn't play	

SPORTS STAFF GAME PICKS

Marc's picks

Prediction record (2-2)
NCAA Lock

W. Virginia at E. Carolina — WV ECU got it done for me last week. It almost pains me to do this to them, but West Virginia won't make the mistakes Va. Tech made. Plus, Pat White's real fast.

NCAA Upset

Kent St. at Iowa St. — Kent St. I don't know anything about Kent State, but I know Iowa State sucks. That's enough for me. If nothing else, I'll get a laugh out of watching the powerhouse program of Kent State make former sports editor Scott Levine's Cyclones look like fools.

NFL Lock

Washington at N.Y.G. — Giants Did anyone see Washington in the preseason? They were terrible. Quarterback problems, defense problems. They've got more problems than Michael Vick at a PETA picnic.

NFL Upset

Tampa at New Orleans — Tampa Jeff Garcia's a winner. To bet against him would be lunacy. Tampa as a sleeper team this year. They don't need Brett Favre. If anything he needs them now.

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MEC

Team

1. Maryville	1-0	Possibly the best class 2 team in the state
2. Chillicothe	1-0	Platte Co. left and they are the next best team
3. Savannah	1-0	Horrable last year, but great start this year
4. Cameron	0-1	Big loss in new coach's first game
5. Smithville	0-1	Got killed last week against stiff competition
6. LeBlond	1-0	Newcomer to the MEC, we'll see how they do
7. Benton	0-1	Only beat Savannah and Lafayette last year
8. Lafayette	0-1	They were losing 33-7 at halftime

Results from last week

1. Maryville beat Hickman Mills	34-25
2. Chillicothe beat Marshall	48-14
3. Savannah beat Trenton	37-21
4. Cameron lost to Excelsior Springs	45-15
5. Smithville lost to Pleasant Hill	28-0
6. LeBlond beat Mid Buchanan	21-15
7. Benton beat Grandview	13-12
8. Lafayette lost to Central (Kansas City)	45-35

Between now and 2010, the name will no longer be Arrowhead Stadium. My prediction for the new name is Wal-Mart Field... at Arrowhead Stadium.

The new name will have Arrowhead included, in accordance with founder Lamar Hunt's wishes. The name change would not be in the best wishes of Hunt. He was open to expressing his wishes to keep the title corporation free.

In 2001, the Denver Broncos went through the same ordeal. The Broncos were getting a new stadium, which meant they needed a new name.

WHAT TO WATCH

Marc's TV picks

Friday

Navy at Ball State, ESPN, 6 p.m. — Tune in for a little old time option fun. This game should be good for Navy vets and Nebraska fans stuck in the past.

I'm not a grump old man who

hates everything to do with change. I love change, and I'm excited the stadium is undergoing renovations. But I don't think the name is in any need of a renovation.

Once the name is changed, it will lose its mystique. Every time I walk through the parking lot of Arrowhead, I get the same feeling in my stomach that can never be reproduced. I am very sad knowing my children may grow up without that feeling attending Wal-Mart Field instead of the storied Arrowhead stadium in the world.

Arrowhead is currently undergoing some major and very expensive renovations. The new renovations are set for completion in 2010 and selling the naming rights of the stadium will bring in about \$6 million annually.

No one should start shopping for a new team to fall in love with quite

yet though. The Chiefs have tried selling the naming right before and were unsuccessful. So this time around we'll see how it all works out.

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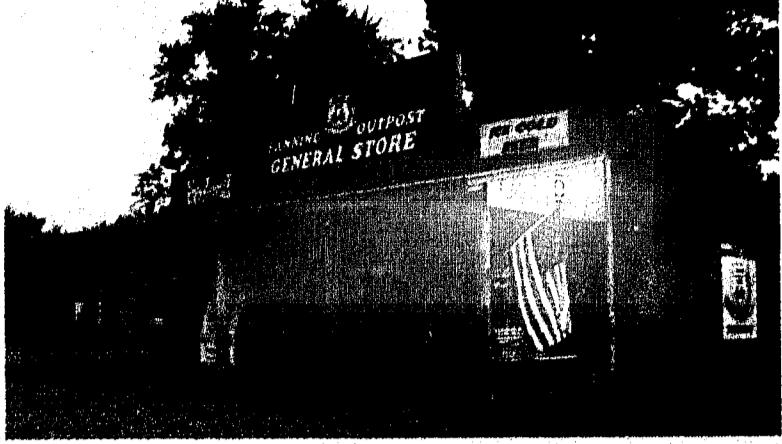
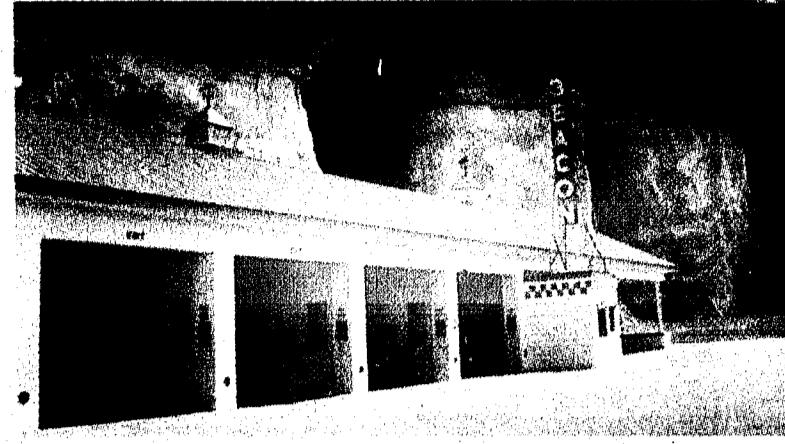
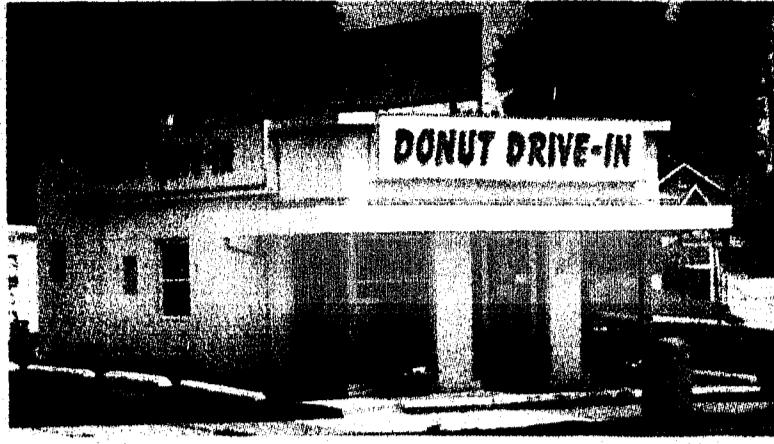
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The Open Road

Staffer travels Missouri's Route 66

By Dominic Genetti
Project Manager

The morning air was sticky and humid. Light fog filled the neighborhood, and the sun was an hour away from rising.

Some may find it odd to hear I made a trip from St. Louis to Springfield in five hours when it can really be done in four.

However, that's when you fly down Interstate-44 at 70 miles per hour.

My trip to Springfield was different, I was traveling down America's most famous highway.

Route 66.

A left turn from my house in south St. Louis and a few blocks down the street, there it was, "The Mother Road," a name christened by travelers when car trips were popular.

There weren't a lot of cars on the road at 5 a.m., those that were had their headlights dimmed by the fog sitting on the ground.

Winding, curving and twisting, Route 66 took me into small cities and ghost towns that at one time thrived on travelers making their way from Chicago to Los Angeles.

It's not like the interstate where you get off at an exit turn left or right and enter a town. On Route 66, you go straight through it. No interchanges, no exit only lanes, just a simple road takes you on a journey.

As I made my way further west out from St. Louis, the fog grew thicker. It sat low to the ground like a graveyard scene in a cheap horror movie. In the distance old motel and restaurant signs cut through the heartland sky.

Years ago, they glowed, blinked and flashed in big letters and shiny neon lights. Simple words like "eat", "restaurant", "vacancy" and "motel" were used to attract hungry and tired motorists from a long day of scenic driving.

The name of the restaurant and motel didn't matter, after all, a bite to eat or a night's stay was just a break. What did matter was getting back on the road.

Rusty and faded, many of the signs are dark today. Some flicker struggling to stay lit while others hold onto the past promoting color TV and air conditioning.

Diners and restaurants sit abandoned or barely half full. Huge individual letters that once spelled out the business' name are missing. Their glass block windows are broken and vandalized.

Just outside Rolla, I came across a run down motel. Weeds, tall grass and unkempt bushes overcame its bathtub shaped swimming pool once filled with children attempting cannon balls while parents watched from picnic tables.

The sun begins to rise.

It looked like a fireball in the color-changing sky rising over tall trees atop Missouri's grand Ozark Mountains. Red, orange, blue; the clouds and fog vanished.

The day had begun. Portions of Route 66 is the outer road of I-44, but when the road begins to wind you break away from loud sounds of 18-wheelers, diesel trucks and revved-up Hondas.

Coasting down the historic highway, my car sounded like a roaring crowd at a baseball game as the wind blew against it. Through woods and farmland, the road rises and falls while zigzagging with the land.

I couldn't tell where I was going. Was I heading west, south, southwest? The road kept twisting and changing direction. It was too hard to tell. It was like driving a paved river.

Upon entering Springfield, the road grew wider. From two lanes to four I was accompanied by more cars as I got closer and closer to journey's end.

Motels and restaurants occupy the strip and many of these are still open with steady business. It gave me an idea how things looked back when Route 66 was still a highway and not the unincorporated paths it is today.

Cars crowding motel parking lots, signs flashing atop diner roofs, local attraction billboards standing tall along the curb, I could almost imagine my 2000 forest green Malibu as its long turquoise mid-'50s predecessor with white wall tires and pointy red tail lights as doo-wop played on the turn dial radio.

It was a good place to end my ride, even though the road kept going.



U.S. ROUTE 66 was 2,448 miles long stretching from Chicago to Los Angeles. Passing through eight states, New Mexico had the longest path of 487 miles and St. Louis was the largest city along the highway between the two cities. Route 66 was unincorporated in 1985 after being broken up by several interstates. Route 66 was the recent subject of the Disney Pixar Movie "Cars" and is also the nickname of a California minor-league baseball team, the Inland-Empire 66ers of San Bernardino.

